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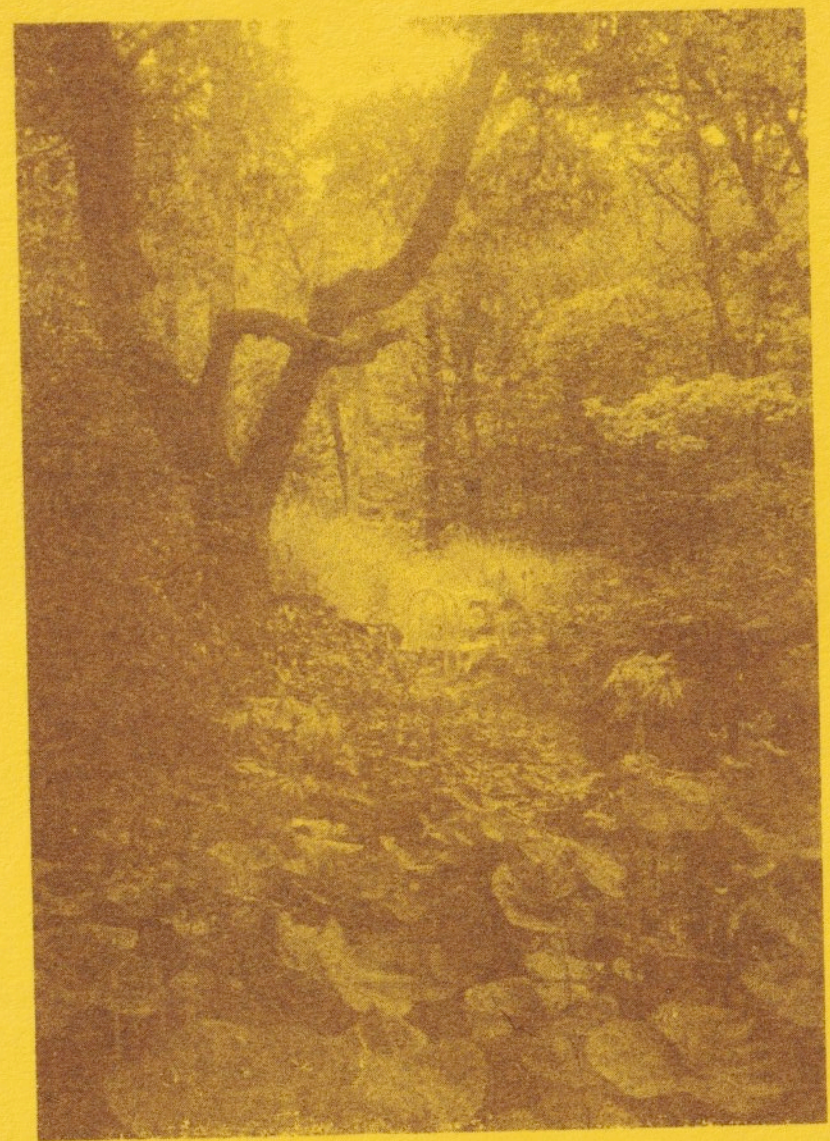

It was sixty five degrees at nine twenty two. Light broke through the forest and fixed a shimmer in the iris blade droplets. The cypress edges were bushiest where they were brightest.

A beam cut through the canopy and landed on the wild plants competing in front of the studio. Another beam fell off the roof onto the edge of the slope. It was unclear if it was truly the edge. The individual power of wild plants knows no bounds.

The fern mass held out their fronds over the bright stairway like cold hands over a fire. There are some the sun reaches and others who reach for the sun. You can tell by body language.

The gate was all light and the studio's ground was not. Except for the yellow rays of rudbeckia looking up at their own image.

Something bit my back while other things dove loudly at my head.

The gate was quiet under the shadow of the tallest tree across the road.

The forsythia was losing its grip on the sun.

A small snake curled up in a suspended bed of shaded cypress branches watched me.

There was nothing in the way between the slope and the sun except where the maple could reach.

I checked for the snake from the other side of the cypress. Its gaze followed me there. A snake's head may be pointing at you at any time.

The forsythia shadow was strong, but one corner escaped its grip and held onto the sun since first light.

The house was under tree shadows completely. How ideal for its occupants at such a summer hour. The tallest shrub in the back could still reach. That is why it is the tallest shrub.

The strange gardens are full of life. Food, water, shelter.

Bright leaves hovered over dark ones.

The maple's shadow began to lose ground.

The snake was still cradled in the cypress scales but with a more relaxed attitude. Nothing makes me feel more vulnerable than walking with my toes out near a snake.

The hottest light was on the studio creek. It stopped at the yellow rays of the rudbeckia. They were in a peripheral ambiance from then on.

Dark entered the gate again because it was closest to the road. Light and dark came from the road.

I found the snake moving in the lawn. I almost stepped on it and a second snake with my open-toed shoes. Snake number two was probably looking at me all day. They scrambled up the slope as I scrammed back to the stone path. We were scared of each other

The end of the day was on the left side of the house. The air behind everything flying over the pond was glowing. Beyond the trees, the sun will shine brightly for hours but it was done in the strange gardens at six.

Nineteen minutes later, I was lighting a piece of aromatic wood from an endangered Peruvian tree when I caught a flare through the old glass windows. It was the yellow rays of the rudbeckia, craving for more and instead shining their own.

This document of the sun was created while I was a gardener-in-residence in the Catskills Mountains as part of Strange Foundation Regenerative Retreats.

Having recently felt like gardening's uninvited stranger, I spent twenty six days working in a strange garden as an actual stranger of the land. The first thing I did to get acquainted was observe the garden's light at regular intervals throughout a single day.

What started as a practical exercise -- to work in a garden, you must know how the light moves -- ended up having an unexpected influence on my internal world. My active attention opened a door for profound reflections that transformed the unthinkable stuff into understanding and connection. I showed up in a funk. Turning my attention out in a natural environment got me out.

Thank you to my host, Willa Koerner for the invitation, and thank you to Mac Benson for the visit and the help.